

CLEARVIEW MANOR CITIZENS ASSOCIATION
1232 Somerset Drive
McLean, Virginia 22101

February 21, 1984

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New Building Project Office
Office of Logistics
Central Intelligence Agency
Washington, D.C. 20505

Re: Technical Memorandum No. 2
CIA Expansion Study

Dear Mr. [redacted]

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Clearview Manor Citizens Association offers the following comments on Technical Memorandum No. 2 on the CIA Expansion Study prepared by Dewberry & Davis and JHK Associates for the Virginia Department of Highways and Transportation. The following comments reflect the unanimous opinion of Association members who attended a meeting on February 20, 1984 at which time the results and projections of Technical Memorandum No. 1 were explained and the alternatives in Technical Memorandum No. 2 were reviewed. The primary recommendations of the Association are as follows:

- Do not widen Rt. 123 to six lanes between Potomac School Road and Merchant Lane;
- Adopt an alternative which relocates Rt. 123 eastbound (toward G.W. Parkway) parallel and adjacent to Rt. 123 westbound (toward McLean);
- Adopt an alternative which incorporates a traffic light at the Rt. 123-Potomac School Road intersection;
- Do not include a grade separation for the intersection of Rt. 193 and Rt. 123; and
- Provide a right turn lane into and out of Merchant Lane from and onto Rt. 123 east bound.

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Our views concentrate on the alternatives proposed for Route 123 between Potomac School Road and the G.W. Parkway because this portion of the study most directly affects us. However, our silence with respect to problems and alternatives relating to the G.W. Parkway and its merge with the Beltway should not be interpreted as agreement with the lack of effective solutions in those areas of the study. We do endorse the proposal to improve the CIA entrance ramp to the G.W. Parkway westbound be adopted. Tech Memo No. 2, p. 42.

Before discussing our recommendations in detail, we wish to point out that Clearview Manor represents an area of approximately 110 homes which use Merchant Lane as their primary entrance and exit road. The Association has a direct interest in this issue and has actively participated in its resolution. We are a member of the Ad Hoc Committee for Traffic To/From the CIA and are represented on the CIA Traffic Advisory Committee. Members of the Association have attended meetings of the McLean Citizens Association and representatives of CIA have met with our Association to explain the project. In summary, our comments are supported by careful review of the data available by our representatives as well as by daily encounters with Route 123 traffic by our entire membership. This includes children using Fairfax County school buses entering Rt. 123 from Merchant Lane.

Six Lanes for Route 123. We are strongly opposed to increasing Route 123 to six lanes at this time. The study (Tech Memo No. 2, p. 29) concludes that a four-lane Rt. 123 will not be adequate to handle traffic in year 2005. While this may be a premature conclusion not supported by the facts, our primary concern is with constructing six lanes between Potomac School Road and Merchant Lane before Rt. 123 is expanded to six lanes beyond those two intersections. The study does not address when or if this would happen. As a result, there would be a six lane bulge for a short distance with traffic compressed back to four lanes beyond those points. This seems very dangerous and ill-advised.

Furthermore, the compression on eastbound Route 123 would occur at the Merchant Lane intersection which is already hazardous (per those who use it every morning). For

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example, Alternative 4 (Tech Memo No. 2, Fig. 9) would merge three lanes from Rt. 123 east with two lanes from Rt. 1983 east, i.e., five lanes into three lanes, just west of Merchant Lane; at, or just east of, Merchant Lane these three surviving lanes (and vehicles) would compress into two lanes heading east to the G.W. Parkway. Those who reside in Clearview Manor exiting onto Rt. 123 in the morning would be confronted with three lanes of traffic (which has just been compressed from five lanes), including two lanes from Rt. 1983 which we cannot see because of the curve in Rt. 123. This, we respectfully submit, is an imposing task not to be undertaken lightly.

It should also be noted that widening Rt. 123 east bound to six lanes all the way to the Kirby Road, G.W. Parkway complex does not resolve the problem. This is the critical bottleneck with room for only two lanes -- one continuing down Rt. 123 toward Chain Bridge and one entering eastbound G.W. Parkway (toward D.C.). What happens to the third lane? In a comparable situation, the study rejects widening the G.W. Parkway from the CIA to the Beltway because this "would not increase capacity at the most critical points," that is, at the merge with the Beltway. See Tech Memo No. 2, p. 6. This is likewise true for Route 123. The bottleneck at the G.W. Parkway will remain so why enlarge Rt. 123 to six lanes until and unless the capacity at that critical point is increased?

Finally, we strongly object to the addition of another eastbound lane on Rt. 123 closer to the residents of Clearview Manor and Evermay. The roadway at this point is elevated above the homes creating a severe noise problem for the homes closest to Rt. 123. If a third lane is added even closer to those homes a bad situation would be aggravated. We believe that this would pose a substantial environmental impact that may not be resolvable given the less adverse and reasonable alternatives available. At a minimum, a significant additional expense would involve the erection of a noise reduction wall or fence.

Relocate Eastbound Route 123. We strongly recommend an alternative which would relocate Rt. 123 east so it is parallel and adjacent to Rt. 123 west. This has several obvious advantages.

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1. Safety at Merchant Lane will improve. We will have a clear line of vision for eastbound Rt. 123 traffic. The existing configuration offers a blind curve with only the briefest opportunity to gauge oncoming traffic before entering the fray.

2. Noise pollution in Evermay and Clearview Manor will improve. Route 123 eastbound is dangerously close to homes in both communities. Relocation parallel and adjacent to Rt. 123 west will take advantage of the topography. The old eastbound roadway is elevated and would serve as an existing berm to reduce noise in our communities.

While Alternatives 2, 2A, 3 and 4 (Tech Memo No. 2, Figs. 7, 8, 9) propose a relocation of eastbound Rt. 123, there are significant distinctions among them in terms of the two factors mentioned above.

Alternatives 2A and 4, while relocating Rt. 123 east, replace the old roadway with two lanes from Rt. 193 at a grade separation. These would then merge into three lanes from Rt. 123 east creating the extremely dangerous conditions at Merchant Lane discussed above. Under Alternatives 2A and 4, noise pollution would not improve, at least not significantly, and traffic safety at Merchant Lane would deteriorate considerably.

Alternatives 2 and 3 maximize traffic safety at Merchant Lane and significantly lessen the potential environmental impact and noise pollution.

Traffic Light at Potomac School Road and Rts. 193/123 Grade Separation. Our preference for alternatives which incorporate a traffic light at Potomac School Road (at least during AM rush hours) is directly linked to the study's preference, and that of VDH&T, for a grade separation at the merge of Rts. 193 and 123. The study treats the two concepts as incompatible. Alternatives 1, 2A, 4, 5 and 6 (Tech Memo No. 2, Figs. 6, 7, 9, 10 and 11) propose a grade separation and no light at Potomac School Road. Alternatives 2, 3 and 7 (Tech Memo No. 2, Figs. 7, 8 and 12) propose a light at Potomac School Road and no grade separation between Rts. 193 and 123.

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The basic rationale for a grade separation is explained in the study as follows. VDH&T policy and its regional planning prefer grade separation when an Urban Minor Arterial road (Rt. 193) intersects with an Urban Principal Arterial and Federal Aid Primary Highway (Rt. 123). Tech Memo No. 2, p. 43. While the consultants acknowledge that any six-lane alternative on Rt. 123 will accommodate traffic demand, a grade separation approach will reduce traffic delay and is therefore preferred. Tech Memo No. 2, p. 36. However, the facts accumulated in Technical Memorandum No. 1 do not support the need for a grade separation at the joinder of Rts. 193 and 123.

Technical Memorandum No. 1 studied existing traffic as well as projections for 1986 (when CIA expansion was assumed to be completed) and 2005 in the area of the CIA. These projections were the basis for a level of service analysis at various locations and the identification of several problem areas. Tech Memo No. 1, pp. 8, 12-13, Fig. 5. Of note is the fact that the existing at-grade intersection of Rts. 193 and 123 which is controlled by a traffic light was not identified as a problem area. This condition is confirmed in the study's level of service analysis. The peak AM level of service at the existing at-grade and light-controlled intersection of Rts. 193 and 123 is "A" and will only become level "B" by the year 2005. Tech Memo No. 1, Fig. 3. (Contrast this with the existing level of service on Rt. 123 eastbound during the AM rush hour which is "D" and will deteriorate to "F" in 2005. Id. A highway should operate at no worse than a level of service "D" during the peak period. Id. at p. 7).

The existing at-grade, light-controlled intersection between Rts. 193 and 123 works. There is no reason to think that it would not continue to work at a position slightly west on Rt. 123. Although plans exist to upgrade the safety of Rt. 193, no increased capacity will result since it has been designated a Virginia Historic Byway. Tech Memo No. 2, p. 6.

Thus, the facts do not warrant discarding a traffic light at the intersection of Potomac School Road and Routes 193 and 123. This we submit is essential for traffic safety. As noted in the study: "Under any of the alternatives, problems crossing Route 123 will continue to exist

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at Merchants (sic) Lane and Potomac School Road under unsignalized conditions." Tech Memo No. 2, p. 36. We wholeheartedly agree. We have already pointed out our concerns with traffic safety at Merchant Lane under certain of the alternatives. This concern is heightened when Alternatives 4, 5 and 6 are examined. Id., Figs. 9, 10 and 11. There would be no traffic light on Route 123 from Kirby Road to the heart of McLean. This, we submit, is a frightening and untenable prospect.

Conclusions. The consultants recommend Alternatives 2A and 4 as warranting further study, with Alternative 4 their apparent choice. Tech Memo No. 2, p. 43. We could not disagree more. Keeping in mind the five planning objectives unanimously endorsed by our Association, we find Alternatives 2A and 4 unacceptable for the following reasons:

- worst possible safety impact at Merchant Lane;
- no improvement in environmental concerns since roadways are not effectively relocated parallel and adjacent to westbound Route 123;
- no traffic light at Potomac School Road; and
- no right turn lane into Merchant Lane appears feasible because of merger of Rts. 123 and 193 just west of Merchant Lane.

We also note that Alternative 4 creates perhaps the shortest and least desirable weaving area between the CIA and Route 193. Tech Memo No. 2, p. 35.

Our review indicates that Alternatives 2 and 3 (Id., Figs. 7 and 8) most closely meet the basic planning objectives we have identified.

- drivers entering Rt. 123 from Merchant Lane will have a clear view of eastbound traffic;
- noise and environmental concerns will be minimized;

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By: Elizabeth C. Campbell
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Representative to Advisory
Committee & Ad Hoc
Committee

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cc: The Honorable Charles S. Robb, Governor of Virginia
The Honorable John Warner, U.S. Senator
The Honorable Frank R. Wolf, U.S. Congressman
Ms. Nancy Falck, Fairfax County Supervisor
Mr. Glen T. Urquhart, Chairman, National Capital
Planning Commission
Mr. Harold King, Virginia Department of Highways and
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Mr. Theodore L. Gray, President, McLean Citizens
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